UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Region 6
1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200
Dallas, TX 75202-2733

January 5, 2018

Stephen Reese
Department of Energy
Strategic Petroleum Reserve
Project Management Office
Environmental Division
900 Commerce Road East
New Orleans, LA 70123

Subject: Detailed Comments on the U. S. Department of Energy intention to prepare an Environmental Assessment to support the proposed Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) Life Extension 2 Project at the storage sites in Bryan Mound, Big Hill, West Hackberry and Bayou Choctaw

Dear Mr. Reese:

The Region 6 office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the November 2, 2017, letter announcing the intention to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Proposed Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) Life Extension 2 Project. The project would consist of repair, replacement and upgrade of storage area equipment and facilities.

To assist in the scoping process for this project, EPA has identified several recommendations for your attention in the preparation of the EA and has enclosed detailed scoping comments for your consideration. Our comments are provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CPR Parts 1500-1508) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

EPA is most concerned about the following recommendations: mitigation, alternative development, impacts to water and biological resources, endangered species, invasive species management, habitat protection, air quality, cumulative impacts, cultural/ historic resource impacts, environmental justice and tribal coordination.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this Letter of Intention and are available to discuss our comments. Please send one hard copy of the Draft EA and a CD ROM copy to this office when completed and submitted for public comment. If you have any questions, please contact me or Gabe Gruta of my staff at (214) 665-8565 or (214) 665-2174; or by e-mail at houston.robert@epa.gov or gruta.gabriel@epa.gov, respectively.

Sincerely,

Robert Houston
Chief, Special Projects Section
6EN-WS

Enclosure

DETAILED SCOPING COMMENTS
ON THE
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
LETTER OF INTENTION
TO PREPARE AN
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)
FOR THE PROPOSED
LIFE EXTENSION 2 PROJECT

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the Act requires the Department of Energy (DOE) Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) to take into account the environmental impacts that could result from an action whenever it considers the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. SPR is also required to discover and address concerns the public may have about proposals. The SPR intends to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzing the impacts of the Life Extension 2 Project involving the repair, replacement and upgrade of storage area equipment and facilities at the Bryan Mound and Big Hill, storage sites in Texas; and West Hackberry and Bayou Choctaw storage sites in Louisiana.

Project Plan and Description:

The Life Extension 2 project proposes the following actions:

Big Hill site

• Replace Onshore Section of Brine Disposal Line;

• Simultaneous Distribution to Chevron/Unocal, Shell and Sun;

• Pipeline – Beaumont Terminal Flow Control;

Bayou Choctaw site

• Site Road Access to BC-19, 101;

Bryan Mound site

• RWIS Channel Upgrades to prevent Silt buildup;

West Hackberry site

• Drill and Complete New Brine Disposal Wells;

- Marine Service Center;
- Enhance Access to Valve Stations;
- Replace the 42-inch Pigging Water Underground Pipeline;
- Revise WH RWINJ Pump Exercise System;
- Subsidence and inundation Mitigation;

Each proposed action has undergone rigorous analysis to determine the proper activities to achieve each goal. There are a number of identified proposed actions that have already meet the criteria for a Categorical Exclusion in accordance with Appendix B to Subpart D of Part 102 – Categorical Exclusions Applicable to Specific Agency Actions. Due to large number of actions being performed either simultaneously or within a short period of time, many of these actions will be analyzed for potential cumulative impact.

Land Requirements for Construction and Operation

The repair, replacement and upgrade of the proposed facilities would disturb the existing deep underground storage caverns created in salt domes along the Gulf Coast region: two sites in Texas (Bryan Mound and Big Hill) and two sites in Louisiana (West Hackberry and Bayou Choctaw). The four sites have a combined design storage capacity of713.5 million barrels.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Air Quality

EPA recommends the EA provide a detailed discussion of ambient air conditions (baseline or existing conditions), National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and non-NAAQS pollutants, criteria pollutant nonattainment areas, and potential air quality impacts of the proposed project(s) (including cumulative and indirect impacts). Such an evaluation is necessary to understand the potential impacts from temporary, long-term, or cumulative degradation of air quality.

We further recommend the EA describe and estimate air emissions from potential construction and maintenance activities, as well as proposed mitigation measures to minimize those emissions. EPA recommends an evaluation of the following measures to reduce emissions of criteria air pollutants and hazardous air pollutants (air toxics).

Recommendations:

Existing Conditions – We recommend the EA provide a detailed discussion of ambient air conditions, National Ambient Air Quality Standards, and criteria pollutant nonattainment areas in the vicinity of the interstate project (Texas and Louisiana).

Quantify Emissions – We recommend the EA estimate emissions of criteria and hazardous air pollutants (air toxics) from the proposed project and discuss the timeframe for release of these emissions over the lifespan of the project. We recommend the EA describe and estimate emissions from the loading and unloading of petroleum, potential construction activities, as well as proposed mitigation measures to minimize these emissions.

Specify Emission Sources – We recommend the EA specify all emission sources by pollutant from mobile sources (on and off-road vehicles including tankers), stationary sources (including portable and temporary emission units, compressor stations, sewage treatment plants etc.), fugitive/vapor emission sources, area sources, and ground disturbance (e.g., from construction, infrastructure upgrades and pipeline modifications/expansion.) This source specific information should be used to identify appropriate mitigation measures and areas in need of the greatest attention. All required permits for proposed actions should also be identified.

Construction Emissions Mitigation Plan – We recommend the EA include a draft Construction Emissions Mitigation Plan and ultimately adopt this plan in the Record of Decision. In addition to all applicable local, state, or federal requirements, we recommend the following control measures (Fugitive Dust, Mobile and Stationary Source and Administrative) be included in the Construction Emissions Mitigation Plan in order to reduce impacts associated with emissions of particulate matter and other pollutants from construction-related activities. Please see Attachment A.

Waters of the United States, including Wetlands

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States (WOUS), including wetlands and other special aquatic sites. The proposed projects may potentially require the placement of fill in WOUS. The DOE should coordinate with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to determine if the proposed project requires a Section 404 permit under the CWA.

The EPA recommends that the DOE include a wetland and stream delineation for all potential WOUS, including ephemeral drainages, in accordance with the 1987 *Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual* and the December 2010 *Atlantic and Gulf Coast Region*

Regional Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual. A jurisdictional determination from the Corps using the data provided by the delineation report will confirm the presence or absence of WOUS in the project area and help determine whether or not the proposed project would require a Section 404 permit.

If a permit is required, the EPA will review the project for compliance with *Federal Guidelines for Specification of Disposal Sites for Dredged or Fill Materials* (40 CFR 230), promulgated pursuant to Section 404(b)(1) of the CWA. Pursuant to 40 CFR 230, any permitted discharge into WOUS must be the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative available to achieve the project purpose. We recommend the EA includes an evaluation of the project alternatives in this context in order to demonstrate the project's compliance with the 404(b)(1) Guidelines. If, under the proposed project, dredged or fill material would be discharged into WOUS, we recommend the EA discuss alternatives to avoid and minimize those discharges.

Finally, the EPA recommends that the DOE include a wetland compensatory mitigation plan that would compensate for unavoidable impacts to aquatic resources in the EA for review and comment by EPA, the Corps, and other interested agencies and stakeholders. The mitigation plan should be included in the EA along with the applicant's alternatives analysis and any additional information relevant to potential impacts to wetlands and other aquatic resources. This would ensure that the EA has sufficient information to demonstrate whether potential adverse impacts to WOUS would occur.

Recommendation:

The EPA asks that the DOE consult with the Corps to determine the extent of jurisdictional wetlands and other WOUS present at the project site. We recommend the EA includes the results of the jurisdictional determination for the project site and address any other relevant requirements pursuant to the CWA Section 404(b)(1), including the requirements to consider less damaging practicable alternatives for any discharges of dredged or fill material into WOUS, to avoid and minimize impacts to aquatic habitats due to discharges of dredge and fill material, and to provide compensatory mitigation for all unavoidable impacts to WOUS.

Attachment A

- *Construction Emissions Mitigation Plan* – we recommend the following control measures be included (**as applicable and practicable**) in the Construction Emissions Mitigation Plan in order to reduce impacts associated with emissions of particulate matter and other pollutants from construction-related activities:

    - Fugitive Dust Source Controls: We recommend that the plan include these general commitments:
        - Stabilize heavily used unpaved construction roads with a non-toxic soil stabilizer or soil weighting agent that will not result in loss of vegetation, or increase other environmental impacts.
        - During grading, use water, as necessary, on disturbed areas in construction sites to control visible plumes.
        - Vehicle Speed
            - Limit speeds to 25 miles per hour on stabilized unpaved roads as long as such speeds do not create visible dust emissions.
            - Limit speeds to 10 miles per hour or less on unpaved areas within construction sites on un-stabilized (and unpaved) roads.
            - Post visible speed limit signs at construction site entrances.
        - Inspect and wash construction equipment vehicle tires, as necessary, so they are free of dirt before entering paved roadways, if applicable.
        - Provide gravel ramps of at least 20 feet in length at tire washing/cleaning stations, and ensure construction vehicles exit construction sites through treated entrance roadways, unless an alternative route has been approved by appropriate lead agencies, if applicable.
        - Use sandbags or equivalent effective measures to prevent run-off to roadways in construction areas adjacent to paved roadways. Ensure consistency with the project's Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan, if such a plan is required for the project.
        - Sweep the first 500 feet of paved roads exiting construction sites, other unpaved roads en route from the construction site, or construction staging areas whenever dirt or runoff from construction activity is visible on paved roads, or at least twice daily (less during periods of precipitation).
        - Stabilize disturbed soils (after active construction activities are completed) with a non-toxic soil stabilizer, soil weighting agent, or other approved soil stabilizing method.
        - Cover or treat soil storage piles with appropriate dust suppressant compounds and disturbed areas that remain inactive for longer than 10 days. Provide vehicles (used to transport solid bulk material on public roadways and that have potential to cause visible emissions) with covers.

Alternatively, sufficiently wet and load materials onto the trucks in a manner to provide at least one foot of freeboard.

- Use wind erosion control techniques (such as windbreaks, water, chemical dust suppressants, and/or vegetation) where soils are disturbed in construction, access and maintenance routes, and materials stock pile areas. Keep related windbreaks in place until the soil is stabilized or permanently covered with vegetation.

- Mobile and Stationary Source Controls:
  - Plan construction scheduling to minimize vehicle trips.
  - Limit idling of heavy equipment to less than 5 minutes and verify through unscheduled inspections.

- Administrative controls:
  - Develop a construction traffic and parking management plan that maintains traffic flow and plan construction to minimize vehicle trips.
  - Identify any sensitive receptors in the project area, such as children, elderly, and the infirm, and specify the means by which impacts to these populations will be minimized (e.g. locate construction equipment and staging zones away from sensitive receptors and building air intakes).
  - Include provisions for monitoring fugitive dust in the fugitive dust control plan and initiate increased mitigation measures to abate any visible dust plumes.